

Elk Ridge Ski Area Background Information

Since the late 1940's a small ski area has existed on Bill Williams Mountain and has, in the past, been an important asset to the City of Williams (the City). During this time, there was a changing economic base for the City brought on by the decline of employment in both the railroad and logging industry and the uncertain effect of the I-40 bypass to the City. This uncertainty allowed the City to become interested in a new ski area located in the Williams Ranger District of the Kaibab National Forest as a way to expand its economic base. At that time, the ski area was comprised of 12 acres of ski trails, one poma-lift with 350 feet of vertical rise, one rope tow, and rudimentary base lodge facilities. The area had an overall capacity of approximately 100 skiers at one time (SAOT). Starting as early as 1967, the area has been considered for possible expansion in reports prepared by the Forest Service and other interested parties in the past.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) on a ski area expansion was completed in 1982, but it was determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be needed to address significant impacts to the area. A draft EIS on the ski area expansion was completed in 1985. The City of Williams contracted with a consulting firm to prepare a development plan, which was completed in 1991. The Kaibab National Forest completed a draft EIS on the revised ski area expansion proposal in 1999. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the plans for the proposed ski area expansion were abandoned and a final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) were not completed.

In December 2017, Mountain Capital Partners (MCP) purchased the ski area infrastructure from the previous owners. Prior to the purchase of the ski area infrastructure, MCP submitted an application for a special use permit for the Elk Ridge Ski Area. The application was accepted. The current ski area term permit authorizes operation of the Elk Ridge Ski Area during the winter (November through April) and summer months, providing downhill skiing and tubing for up to 310 persons at one time, with total annual visits averaging 3,400. Existing improvements within the permit area boundary include two surface lifts (a poma lift and a rope tow), a ski lodge with 4,435 square feet inside space and 1,000 square feet outside deck, a parking area for up to 170 vehicles, eight cleared ski and tubing runs, an underground 34,500 gallon water storage cistern, a septic system designed for 515 people per day peak usage, a generator building, two vault toilets, and three small lift-associated buildings at the termini of the two lifts. Summer operations include maintenance activities, tubing on an artificial surface, and infrequent small special events held at the lodge.

During the beginning NEPA stages of issuing this permit to MCP, MSO were found close to the ski area during the Bill Williams Mountain Restoration Projects Implementation process. Because of this, consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was initiated for both projects. Consultation is currently ongoing.

If permitted, the SUP would address an error in the exiting permit regarding acreage. In the 1980's the ski area boundary was expanded to 67 acres from the 37 currently stated in the permit. This is an administrative error and would be updated to the correct acreage on issuance of the permit.